

Frame Contention in Different Types of Media Ownership - A Comparison between The Star Online and Sinar Online's Media Coverage on 2017 Budget

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to examine the difference of media coverage between The Star, owned by ruling party and Sinar Harian, a privately-owned news provider on the 2017 Budget. Media ownership is understood to be affecting objectivity in media coverage, given its influence on the sources to be used, as well as how issues are portrayed. This content analysis study used a census sample of the first 14 days after its tabling. To differentiate the coverage between these two mainstream news provider, the researcher studied the sources used by both news providers, frames utilized in the coverage of the budget using Semetko and Valkenberg's (2000) generic news frame, as well as the news slants that are apparent in both news providers' reporting of the budget as basis for comparison. Results of

the study show that while both news providers mostly used the ruling government representative as their sources and the responsibility frame in their coverage, a sheer difference can be seen in the news slants as The Star's coverage of the budget are more positive, as compared to Sinar Online which can be considered more balanced. Nevertheless, Sinar Online was found to have tendencies to politicize its coverage of the budget; by employing more conflict frames on issues not directly related to the content of the budget, as well as using more opposition party members as their news sources.

Keywords: *Media ownership, media coverage, news framing, federal budget*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Federal budget is an important agenda for a government to administer its country. In Malaysia, various steps has been taken by the government to improve the level performance of budgeting by the federal government in order to promote the nation-building agendas [1], plus the ability for a government to redistribute income through federal budgeting [2] via fiscal policy [3] has made federal budget an important issue to be studied under various fields.

Policy making can be very complex process as it involved areas of interrelated factors that are tied together, as issues regarding policy-making transcends many disciplines of studies, thus making it require information from various theories, actors and perspective for the information to be of great effect in policy making processes [4], by which the Agenda-Setting Theory have found that news media wields the ability to tell their audience "what to think about" [5], thus making information conveyed by the news media about federal budgets remain important for policy makers. Further studies under this theory had led to rise of priming and framing studies that are now used majorly in communication studies, to explain an issue or a phenomenon, with the framing theory now adopted by other disciplines ranging from sociology, economics, policy research,

communications science, and political communications among many other fields [6]. Previous framing studies conducted on other countries' federal budgets had shown that media coverage on federal budgets have found to be having the ability to sway public opinion about the government over budget deficits [7], promote certain economic ideologies such as neoliberalism [8] and some news media had even switched from objective news reporting to ideology-driven discourse in their coverage of federal budget [9].

Malaysia's line item budgeting was inherited from the British ever since its independence [1] and before improvements were introduced, Malaysia's budgeting system had been widely criticized for its inefficiency and unresponsiveness of the human factor in its crafting [10]. Nevertheless, following the institutionalized reform efforts like the Performance Budgeting System (PPBS) in 1969, and 1990 the Modified Budgeting System, Malaysia's federal budget has been consistently remaining at deficit [1] until today, at 3.2 percent [11]. Following this situation, the government has been practicing expansionary fiscal policy to influence the nation's economy; by increasing government spending while at the same time lowering taxes to stimulate economic growth [12]. Despite literatures on Malaysia's federal budget going back to the '80s offering perspectives on the budget based on their expertise and field of studies [10], the studies were based from an either economics viewpoint [2, 12], policy-making studies [1,17], and political-economy studies [18], with virtually no study found analysing how the federal budget is presented, or "framed" in the media. As most literature on Malaysia's federal budget were economic, policy and political studies, it can be assumed that these literatures however, are without consideration of how the information has been conveyed through the media, especially mainstream media and the gap in understanding how the citizens perceived the previous federal budgets. Given news media's framing ability to frame how their audience perceive an issue or policy based on their content by making certain aspects appearing to be more salient [16], this content analysis study intends to examine the difference in the sources used, news frames employed and news slants retrieved in Malaysia's mainstream news portal with different types of ownership, The

Star Online (ruling party-owned) and Sinar Online (privately-owned) in portraying the Malaysia's 2017 Budget during first 14 days after its tabling. The news frames are determined accordingly as categorized by Semetko and Valkenberg (2000)'s 5 generic news frames; *economic consequences, responsibility, conflict, human interest and morality*.

2.0 PREVIOUS STUDIES

2.1 Framing studies of other countries' federal budgets

Despite many previous framing studies conducted on other countries' federal budget showed that its media coverage were found to be have quite a significant impact by being the catalyst in the dramatic shift of American public opinion over their 1996 federal budget, as public opinion polls appeared to have been swayed accordingly to the shifts in political debates that are covered by the news media wherein federal budget deficits slowly becoming a major concern among the American public [7], while another study on Pakistan's national and English-language media coverage on their 2011 and 2012 federal budget appeared shown the disparity between the issues regarding federal budget is framed, as an analysis of their headlines shown that not only the news providers appeared to pursue each of their own ideologies through wordings of headlines, but language remains a critical factor in how the issues of the budget was framed.[9] While English-language media recognizes their contents are meant for eyes of the non-nationals as well and not only for the Pakistanis, the headlines were framed as to present a good image of Pakistan to the world, whereas Urdu-language media seemed to focus more on social issues revolved around the federal budget, targeting the common and the national readers that were "presented in a way to inform the uninformed readers".

2.2.1 Malaysia's federal budgets

In a pioneer exploration study exploring the federal budgetary reforms in Malaysia [1], the authors highlights that being a developing country, Malaysia faced the challenges of balancing various resources scarcity with endless budget spending demands, eventually requiring the governments to

allocate funds under the federal budget in ways that are more economical, effective, efficient and accountable, leading to the introduction of the Programs Performance Budgeting System (PPBS) in 1969. Prior to the reform efforts, Malaysia's federal budget had long been criticized for its excessive focus on the technical aspects while abandoning of human factor; its disregard to data in the context of understanding, accessibility and aptitude and poor support from top level administrators among any other factors [10]. PPBS required every government department to propose their budget using the cost-benefit analysis for it to be considered under the federal budget. The introduction of the Modified Budgeting System (MBS) in 1990 was to complement PPBS's inadequacies by optimizing resource allocation and program performances, while promoting better accountability. However, the introduction of these budget reform mechanism, has saw the amount of budget spending increased moderately compared to government revenue and caused budget deficit, especially following the introduction of the MBS from 1990-2008 that saw the amount of expenditure increasing immensely as compared to the amount of government revenue [17].

Fiscal policy can be defined as any mechanism within the federal budget that is utilized to affect a nation's economy usually by the amount the government spends and the taxes it collect [3]; with expansionary policies refers to a condition of a higher budget deficit, wherein there is an increase in spending while taxes are lowered, as in the case of Malaysia's federal budgets [23]. A VAR model study found evidence of a long-run causal relationship between Malaysia's governments's spending growth and the revenue collected through taxation, despite its trend of tax collection inconsistently changing upward and downward depending on economic conditions [12].

2.2.2 Malaysia's 2017 Federal Budget

On October 21st 2016, Malaysian Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Mohd Najib Abdul Razak tabled the proposed the RM260.8 billion federal budget themed "Ensuring Unity and Economic Growth, Inclusive Prudent Spending and Wellbeing of the Rakyat" [25]. Expected to address the nation's wellbeing during these uncertain economic times

plus managing the demands of the people to solve the problem of rise in cost of living [26], crafting a balanced federal budget while committing to a responsible rate of fiscal deficit without compromising economic growth is a tough situation, as Budget 2016 may need to be recalibrated around January due to the slump in global oil price [27]. Asset management firm Affin Hwang predicted in order to that the budget will be people and business centric in, and in order to address the issue of rise in cost of living, bigger cash handouts in the form Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) was expected to be given out to stimulate disposable income among the B40 group [28].

Following the tabling session, the budget has been getting mixed responses, with industry players lauding the budget for many economic initiatives and tax incentives that are expected to increase the economic growth of the country, while some argued that the budget did not address the issue of national debt and cost of living. The reaction for the budget was so polarized that during its tabling session, in an unprecedented act, the opposition members of the parliament staged a walkout protest during Najib's speech, in which the opposition maintain to be the appropriate response towards the budget. Nevertheless, following the tabling sessions, economists and financial experts mostly agreed that the budget is indeed crafted in a way that is very people-centric [29, 30], by which many goodies along with affordable housing initiatives are provided under the budget which is expected to address the people's demand for better quality in living standards.

Describing the budget as a realistic plan, Malaysia Rating Corporation Berhad underlined that the government has put an effort to revitalized Malaysia digital economic growth, allocating RM 162 million to execute many digital promotional programmes, marking 2017 as Malaysia' year of internet economy [33]. The many tax incentives introduced were expected to promote economic growth as well as diversifying government revenue. Nonetheless, the budget was also described as a notably tight budget, with the expected gross domestic product (GDP) for the year 2017 is at 19.6%, falling 0.7pp form last year's GDP at 20.3%, plus many ministries are

to expect slash in funding [28]. The education sector is predicted to be experiencing ous slash in their budget, as public universities will have 19 percent reduction in their combined operating budgets, with the biggest universities that will have their fund slashed are Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia [35], while the allocation for defense ministry was assumed would have to be slashed by 13 percent in the amount of RM15.06 billion, making the budget for defense falling back to their 2012 level [36].

2.2. Malaysian media

Media plays an important part as a tool to disseminate information about public policies. Considered an important tool for a healthy democracy, media, in particular newspapers traditionally perform as conduit for the establishment to convey the information to the masses. However, the types of ownership of the media and the top hierarchy in the structure of a media organization were proven to play a significant role in influencing media content. The ownership factor remains critical in decision making in newsrooms, as every member of the organization is answerable to its owners and immediate coordinators [37]. In a study on journalists learn-in-practice programmes, it was found that a news editor's political survival depends upon the complex position of news organizations functioning as a sub-system of the country's larger political system, a certain element of self-censorship is imposed on these new journalists' learning module, imposing them to practice self-censorship in their reporting, with news providers such as NST and The Star cited as being politically influenced by UMNO and MCA respectively due to their ownership issues [42].

Most print and broadcast media ownership in Malaysia is pooled with BN-linked companies, conglomerate Media Prima and Utusan Melayu group that own almost all mainstream newspapers are linked to UMNO, while MCA investment arm Huaren Management owns the top-selling English-medium The Star [43]. Nevertheless, the rise of 'information age' saw transformations undergone in Malaysian media market, by which new media shifting from the traditional role of media from playing their part

in nation-building role towards a more “objective” reporting. In 2006, Kumpulan Media Karangkraf, owned by Hussamuddin Yaacob launched Sinar Harian, a print newspaper aiming to provide a more balanced reporting by giving more space for both government as well as opposition parties representatives to present their ideas and defend their stand, which something that is not offered by other mainstreams newspapers [47]. In an empirical study on information resources and voting patterns in the parliamentary constituency of Batu Pahat, it was found that respondents who see themselves as ‘neutral’ in seeking out their political sources chose Sinar Harian as their main news source, affirming the newspaper as unbiased, and more inclusive of grassroots politics [50].

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research was content analysis. Unit of analysis for this study was the online news articles retrieved from both The Star Online and Sinar Online. By collecting these articles have allowed researcher to make analysis on the framing elements approached in each online news articles. Framing elements in online news articles were discussed to the objectives of this study which include determined of types of frame, source of news, and news slant. As for this study, the timeframe was of two weeks, beginning from 22 October 2016 to 4 November 2016, there were 189 online news articles that are related to the budget were retrieved from both online newspapers as the population, 95 news articles from The Star Online and 94 news articles from Sinar Online.

The study was conducted using coding sheet as research instrument to collect data from the newspapers’ coverage of the budget, where each articles retrieved were analysed and coded to a Microsoft Excel sheet accordingly. The coding sheet was first divided into two categories according to types of news provider. The spreadsheet consisted of three types of variables; type of source, types of news frames and news slants and marked simply by the number 1 to show its value.

The first variable that were coded is the “types of source” used by the news providers, by which the types of source were determined by

replicating Liang (2014) in his study of media framing of another economic issue, by which categories of sources are (1) Ruling coalition parties or BN: consisting of leaders and representatives the federal government and the ruling party coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) including its component parties and representatives of federal government were also included under this category. The other type of source is (2) Opposition party members; (3) Professionals and academicians, (4) Non-governmental organisations (NGO); and lastly, (5) Common civilians. The next variable was “types of frame” according to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)’s generic news frame [55]; economic interests, responsibility, conflict, human interests, and morality and responsibility. On the fourth section, for the variable of “news slant”, there were three codes determined for questions under this section, which comprised of supportive, critical and neutral, replicated from Lai and Md. Sidin’s approach [56].

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 RQ1: What are the sources used by The Star Online and Sinar Online’s in their coverage of the 2017 Budget?

From the findings it was found that both *The Star* and *Sinar* relied mostly on federal government representatives as their news sources with varied figures related to the government in their 2017 Budget coverage. However, the disparage of frequency in opposition parties’ being used as news source between these two different types of media ownership is clear, as *The Star* only used opposition members as source at 2.94 percent, while *Sinar* used the opposition party members as their second most used news source at 21.88 percent. This is opposed to *The Star* which utilized professionals as their second most news source, in the likes of financial industry players, economists, and academicians. Other types of news sources can be observed in the following table:

TABLE 1

Sources of News

	<i>The Star</i> n=102 %	<i>Sinar Harian</i> n=96 %
Ruling coalition representatives (BN)	41.18	58.33
Opposition parties	2.94	21.88
Professionals	37.25	14.58
Non-governmental organization	8.82	3.13
Common civilians	9.81	2.08

4.2 RQ2: What are the news frames used by *The Star Online* and *Sinar Online* in their coverage of the 2017 Budget?

4.2.1 *The Star Online*

4.2.1.1 *Responsibility frame*

The Star covered the 2017 Budget most frequently using the responsibility frame at 40.94 percent, followed by economic interest at 34.65 percent. Using the responsibility frame, the budget is described as being responsibly crafted by the government, stressing that while the budget may contain many initiatives that will help ease financial burdens, the government will not back down in making decisions that will be deemed unpopular. In the same day, a feature on the budget described the budget as a balanced deal that is able to meet the people's demands without jeopardizing the country's financial stability, assertions on the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness nature of the budget is proof of how well the country is being managed by Prime Minister Najib Razak. The following day, an independent financial adviser suggested that as the federal government has shown many initiatives to help ease the cost of living among the people, it is up to the people themselves to balance their own needs to ensure they live a fulfilling life. However, the government is also asked to address its disproportionate operating expenditure under the budget, especially regarding the bloated civil service.

The frame of responsibility was again evident when discussing the various housing initiatives introduced under the budget, as a day after

the budget tabling, *The Star* featured an opinion piece of 8 CEOs of local financial industry players agreeing that the budget is a well-thought proposal that will benefit the country's economic growth, especially in the housing industry and Malaysian Investment Banking Association chairman Azman Hashim praised the initiatives under the 2017 Budget that will promote the industry's growth thanks to the government for its commitment to expand the economy at a healthy pace, while TY Teoh International's Richard Oon also urge the youth to be more responsive, saying that since the government had offered so many initiatives to help younger generation afford their own first homes, it is up to the youth to capitalize on this offer. In a report from the business news section, stocks of certain local construction groups appeared to be hitting new highs following the housing initiative announcements under the budget. Nevertheless, under the responsibility frame, a risk management executive was quoted advising the government to carefully consider the types and location of the houses that are to be put up as rental, while National House Buyers Association's Chang Kim Loong stressed that the government should be doing more than just reducing stamp duties to promote the housing industry growth, as property speculators are the ones to be gaining most profit out of the reduction, while Penang State Housing, Town and Country Planning Committee's Jagdeep Singh Deo urged the government to also offer the Budget 2017's special PR1MA financing scheme to the state-owned housing scheme as these state projects offer affordable houses for the poor families.

The responsibility frame is also apparent in *The Star's* coverage of the budget on education issues, as Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia's Datin Noor Azimah lauded the budget's increase in allocation for English language strengthening programme as signs of government's commitment towards English proficiency among students. Malaysian English Language Teaching Association's Dr S. Ganakumaran stressed that the government must ensure that the teachers' English fluency comes first in its implementation of the RM90mil allocation for enhancement under the 2017 Budget. In a letter written by "Samuel Yesuiah", the writer

stressed the need for continuous professional courses held for teachers under the Education Transformation Programme to be equipped with qualified presenters. Vernacular education issues were also highlighted under this frame as Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi urged the Indian community to focus on education to improve their social mobility, wherein the budget's allocation for Tamil schools and micro-financing are proof of the government's commitment towards the Indian community. Another feature on Tamil vernacular schools elaborates on the Tamil schools' achievements in various competitions, and giving credits to the government's continuing support of the Budget 2017. Regarding higher education issues, UiTM vice-chancellor Prof Emeritus Dr Hassan was quoted applauding the increased broadband speed that will be helping university staffs and graduates perform better in their researches, while commenting on the budget cuts for higher institutions, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Dr Noor Azlan Ghani asserts that public universities must yield their intellectual strength to generate their own income and not to rely on government's funding.

The responsibility frame is also used to describe government's role in assisting the small business growth under the budget as Deputy Finance Minister Othman Aziz, commented that the budget is asserting the government's objective of boosting the growth of SMEs. The budget is also described as to be a beneficial stimulant for SME stocks in the market, as EPF CEO Shahril Ridza Ridzuan affirmed that the Small and Mid-Cap PLC Research Scheme introduced under the budget will help reinvigorate interests SME's stocks, following MIDF Group's Mohd Najib Abdullah's announcement that small companies' stocks are now reinvigorated thanks to the budget's initiatives. The notion of the budget promoting small business growth is further asserted as Cradle Fund's Nazrin Hassan praised it for being entrepreneur-friendly, and the declaration of 2017 being a Startup & SME Promotion Year, would put Malaysia as a more popular primary startup hub.

The responsibility frame is also used in discussing the 2017 Budget's impact on national healthcare system, as the next day after the budget

tabling *The Star* published a feature elaborating on how the amount of allocation provided under healthcare in the budget allows non-profit hospitals to charge the same rate as government hospitals, while Health Minister Dr S. Subramaniam commented on the proposed cooperation between government hospitals and non-profit hospitals as an appropriate move as both hospitals are allowed to share expertise and costs, and the notion is supported by Wan Saiful Wan Jan in his op-ed. Penang Hospital Visitors Board chairman Lim Thoon Deong commented that allocation under the budget given to Penang Hospital, Serdang Hospital and Sultanah Aminah Hospital in Johor will allow more patients to better equipment, while National Cancer Society of Malaysia's Dr Saunthari Somasundaram praised the allocation for free mammograms and HPV immunisations that will encourage women to go for early testing for cancer.

The Star also used the responsibility frame to focus on the new cooperation between Malaysia and China, as Malaysia-China Business Council chairman Ong Ka Ting avowed that the government's commitment to promote digital economy growth is proven by this cooperation with China, and in the following day, he commended the platforms provided by the government in the realms of digital economy under this new heights of Malaysia-China bilateral relationships. Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai also shared the sentiment, as he asserted that the East Coast Rail Line (ECRL) announced would be the biggest economic deal that Malaysia has ever done with China.

Under the responsibility frame, *The Star* also highlighted environmental issues under the budget, as Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia's Nithi Nesadurai questioned the government's commitment towards the Paris Agreement as environmental issues have appeared to have been snubbed from the federal budget two years in a row, while DAP member Ong Kian Ming was quoted to be astonished to see that the Environment Department's monitoring and enforcement allocation has been reduced, and called for the Finance Minister to revise the budget for the department.

4.2.1.2 Economic interest

The Star also applied the economic interest frame in their coverage of the 2017 Budget frequently at 34.65 percent, with most of its coverage in using this frame is focused on taxation issues. During the budget tabling session, Najib explains how the volatility of global oil market prices necessitates the government to diversify its income through various means such as taxation and subsidy rationalization. KPMG Partner Ooi Kok Seng highlighted that the proposed tax reduction scheme may help companies to allocate more funds for their expansions, PwC's Lavindran Sandragasu explained that tax reduction on SMEs will help boost the growth of the players before TPPA takes place in the country, and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Wee Ka Siong commended the tax initiatives as encouragement for more growth by giving reduction based on company's increase in income, while Ernst & Young's Amarjeet Singh lauded the establishment Collection Intelligence Arrangement that will further help combat tax evasion in the country. NSTP chief executive officer Mohammad Azlan Abdullah stated that the tax exemption for news subscription is a good initiative to promote a knowledge-based economy in the country, while The Actors Studio Malaysia co-founder Faridah Merican lauded the higher tax relief for art sponsorship may see private sector players investing more in local art scene.

The economic interest frame is continued in *The Star's* 2017 budget coverage on the government's initiative of working together with China, as Najib affirmed that Malaysia appreciates the opportunity to be working with them that runs well with the budget's new focus on digital economy, while he reiterated that China's economic potential is much bigger as compared to the United States in terms of population in the realm of digital economy and tourism industry. Malaysia's Ambassador to China Zainuddin Yahya highlights that Najib's meeting with the Alibaba founder, Jack Ma would be highlight of this official visit, as Ma is expected to be advising Malaysia in the realm of digital economy under the 2017 Budget proposal. Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai asserted that the East Coast Rail Line project announced would be the biggest economic deal that Malaysia has ever done with China; as not only China is providing the soft loans, but

the detailed engineering, design, materials procurement and delivery will all be conducted by them. He also affirmed that the estimated RM55 billion project would make Gombak a Greater KL's integrated transportation hub for, as well as several east coast regions becoming the next economic hub. An anonymous source was also quoted saying that the state-owned China Railway Group Ltd is now buying shares of Titijaya Land Bhd's stocks, which is the most likely to win the affordable house projects announced under the budget, as China, intends to make Malaysia as a hub in its Silk Road initiative.

The economic interest frame is also used in *The Star's* coverage of the budget's impact on the housing industry as economics lecturers lauding the initiatives promoting in the housing industry under the budget with CIMB Research estimating that 45% out of RM99 billion construction jobs under the budget would directly benefit smaller contractors in the country. Employees Provident Fund (EPF) CEO Shahril Ridza Ridzuan explained that while the Budget 2017 may offer a new home financing plan at 90 to 100 percent under the PR1MA scheme, employees are still not allowed to withdraw their Account 2 contributions as to maintain assurance with banks who will be giving out the loans, while Mah Sing CEO Ho Hon Sang suggested that to help first-time homebuyers to own their first house, the Government should consider revising the percentage of funds in EPF Two from the current 30% to 40% to assist home financing. National House Buyers Association argued that the assistance for first-time home buyers at 90 to 100 percent may lead to unintended consequences should the applicants are burdened by other loans as well, risking an imminent default among the first-time buyers.

4.2.1.3 Conflict

The conflict frame is ranked third in *The Star's* coverage of the 2017 budget at 16.54, starting with the coverage of the opposition's walkout protest during the budget tabling session, as Najib poked fun of the opposition for claiming that Malaysia's economy will be going through some difficult times, resulting for the opposition to holding up

“Siapa MO1?” placards and walking off from the session after refusing Dewan Rakyat Speaker Pandikar Amin’s order for them to sit down. The unusual reaction from the opposition during the presentation causing a ruckus in the parliament was deemed unprecedented, as Sembrong MP Hishammuddin Hussein asserted that opposition’s action of staging a walkout during the budget presentation was immature and disgraceful. However, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng justified the walkout by his fellow opposition, claiming that the budget was unfair since Penang received no allocation from the budget despite its request for the airport-expansion, and would not be reducing rakyat’s financial burden. Dewan Rakyat Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia later stressed that he does not need to apologize to the opposition who broke the parliament’s standing order by planning a walkout from the budget presentation.

The conflict frame is also evident in *The Star’s* reporting as the issue about the controversial 1MDB was brought up by former members of the cabinet ministers during one of the debate session. During the Budget 2017 debate session, Semporna MP Seir Mohd Shafie Apdal questions how 1MDB will benefit the nation as compared to previous government initiatives that have created many local jobs, and Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Abdul Rahman Dahlan commenting on the irony of former Second Finance Minister Hanadzlah warning on the repercussions of 1MDB’s mismanagement and questioned his dignity since 1MDB used to be under his watch as well. During one of Budget 2017’s debate session, Muhyiddin Yassin, Mohd Shae Apdal and Ahmad Husni were alleged to have leaked government secrets regarding 1MDB, and Deputy Prime Minister Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi later informed the press that the police are continuing their investigations on the allegation of the three former ministers. In an op-ed written by media consultant M. Veera Pandiyan, he wrote that the three former ministers who broke their executive tenure’s oath of secrecy in the parliament enjoy the immunity under the constitution.

4.2.1.4 Human Interest

The human interest frame is ranked fourth in *The Star’s* coverage of

the budget at 6.3 percent, with most of the coverage on educational issues. University students were reported to be lauding the budget for allowing them to spend the vouchers on other essentials for their studies, rather than just textbooks, while a feature on Tamil vernacular schools elaborated on how their achievements in various competitions were due to government's support which is being continued under the 2017 Budget. Regarding the PTPTN's proposed repayment plan, a few graduates and undergraduates applauded the budget's focus on education and a civilian commenting on sharing her story that while she may have missed her chance to convert her debt into scholarship, she's satisfied that she may be getting discounts under this repayment plan proposal.

In addition to that, *The Star*'s coverage of the budget also applied the human interest frame on family issues, as a housewife interviewed lauded the financial aids for poor families included in the budget. Regarding the budget's RM222mil water treatment projects for 42 orang asli villages, one of the villagers explained that Orang Asli's need for new houses were due to the large number of their family members. While others who were interviewed lauded the budget's allocation for family matters, the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action asserted that new mothers need knowledge and support in forms of paid maternity leaves to be together with their babies, rather than just tax exemption for breastfeeding equipment. In another vox pop article, two civil servant retirees lamented that there were not much allocation given to retirees despite the rise in cost of living.

4.2.1.5 Morality

The morality frame was the least used in *The Star*'s coverage of the budget, with only two stories using the frame (1.57 percent); with Prime Minister Najib Razak and three of his cabinet ministers condemning the opposition's walkout during the budget tabling as as crude and insulting to the parliament, and Sembrong MP Hishamuddin Hussein resenting oppositions' unprecedented actions as disgraceful and immature.

4.2.2 Sinar Online

4.2.2.1 Responsibility frame

Sinar covered the 2017 Budget most frequently using the responsibility frame at 41.27 percent, followed by conflict frame at 30.16 percent. Under the responsibility frame, the cost of living issues, specifically on subsidies rationalization schemes were the most evident used by *Sinar*. While Deloitte's Senthuran Elalingam commented that the government's move to maintain the GST rate at 6 percent will be celebrated as good news for the people as it will not further their financial, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng stressed that the government has not done enough to ease the financial burden of the people under the budget, as the subsidies rationalization schemes will cancel out the goodies provided, and later commented that the budget failed to address the people's financial problems such as rise in cost of living as policies such cooking oil subsidy rationalization, increase of petrol price and four toll hikes as of next year are proofs of the federal government's inability to provide better lives for the people. PAS Youth's Syahir Sulaiman commented that the budget did not take into account the people's financial burden as not only that the 20% reduction on higher learning institution's allocation is at its lowest since 2011, but the cooking oil subsidy rationalization policy would eventually only lead to higher price of food while his fellow colleague Ahmad Fadhli Shaari echoed that government should not have raise the price for petrol when the people is still burdened financially while having to cope with the adjustments made under the 2017 Budget. Malaysian Trades Union Congress Secretary-General N Gopal Krishnam asserted that the announcement made under the budget only proves that the government holds no interest about workers from the private sectors as despite their contribution towards the economic growth, plus the cooking oil subsidy rationalization will further burden the private workers. Later in an op-ed, member of PPBM Supreme Council Abdul Kadir Jasin wrote that the budget is crafted in a way only to appeal to certain groups; goodies provision for the lower income, uninformed public for political mileage and the subsidies rationalization and economic transformation to boost the financial experts and investors' confidence without addressing the real problem, which is the increasing rate of national debt ever since Najib took over the country.

The budget also drew lots of criticism under the responsibility frame, as issues such as lack of transparency and clarity in the budget's presentation were the common factor raised. Kuala Terengganu MP Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah Raja Ahmad claimed that the totalled RM260.8 billion 2017 Budget will posed as the greatest challenge for the government due to global economic instability and the lack of clarity on where will the funding be coming from. Former Bersih chairman S. Ambiga commented that while this year's budget proposal may at first seemed as a 'feel-good' budget, but the lack of clarity in the budget is the real problem that should be addressed. Taxand Malaysia's Dr Veerinderjeet Singh suggested that Budget 2017 may be in need of a recalibration as it does not take into account the volatility of global oil price, and may be in need of recalibration in the near future. Nevertheless, representatives of the federal government dismissed such claims, as Deputy Finance Minister 1 Othman Aziz stressed that the talks of government would not be able to fulfill the 2017 Budget promises for the country's finance is going under is false, because the government has given a careful thought when crafting the budget, while Kelantan UMNO Chairman Mustapa Mohamed also rejected suggestions that the country is going bankrupt by certain parties, because as if so, the government would not be able to pay the wages of civil servants, and the recent budget announcement also shows that he government is capable to provide financial aid for those in need.

Sinar also applied the responsibility frame in coverage of the budget cuts that ministries will be undergoing in 2017, with representatives from the ministry clarifying the situation further. Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar explained that while his ministry did not receive any special allocation and all the government ministries will be experiencing reduction in their funding under the 2017 Budget, he is confident that his ministry will be able to perform their duties as usual. Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin told that he is confident that despite his ministry's fund for the future SEA and Para ASEAN Games will be reduced from RM500 million to RM450 million, the events will still be going smoothly, and later explained that RM70

million from the total RM1.2 billion allocation for sports development will be used for coaching development, as it is one of the most important aspect that his ministry agree to be a vital part for sports growth in the country. Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein asserts that the reduction in government funding for all ministries will not be affecting the procurement and development process of his ministry, as they had always been aiming improve efficiency in productivity and spending, whereas in an official statement released by the Ministry of Education clarified that the move to reduce the budget was in tandem with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025 (PPPM 2013-2025) to lower the institutions of higher learning's immense dependency on the government for funding. Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Rohani Abdul Karim stressed that the allocations provided by the 2017 Budget will further strengthen her ministry's effort to help its target groups such as women, children and the disabled.

Education issues were also covered in the responsibility frame, as following Najib's announcement for R570million aid for schools to improve their infrastructure, Deputy Minister 1 of Education Senator Chong Sin Woon explained that his ministry has already identified the schools that will be given these funding. Higher learning institutions; issues were also addressed under this frame, as speaking in front of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah student representative council, Sabah Chief Minister Musa Aman urged the students to be more responsible in balancing their leadership and academic activities, for the government has provided incentives and scholarships for higher education institution students. government repealing of book voucher system and replacing it with the debit card system On the other hand, regarding the budget's proposal of repealing the book voucher system and replacing it with the debit card system, Malaysian Book Publishers Association (MAPOBA) Ishak Hamzah stressed that this will only further the hardships face by book publishing industry players as more students will only be interested in using those cards to buy electronic stuffs rather than invest in books.

The ECRL project is also covered in the responsibility frame, as

Secretary General of Treasury Irwan gar Abdullah explained that the urgency to go through with the ECRL project is because not only that it will encourage the growth of transportation industry and small towns around the railways, plus the funding provided by China for the project is very competitive. Terengganu Menteri Besar Ahmad Razif Abd Rahman congratulates Najib for his announcements under the 2017 Budget and described the budget as being comprehensive, on point and will be bringing more economic growth, especially for the people of Terengganu thanks to the ECRL project, while Dungun parliamentary development officer Din Adam commented that the project will be bringing many benefits to the people of Dungun as it enables them a comfortable and faster alternative of road transportation. However, requesting for a parliamentary special committee to investigate on the project Pokok Sena MP Mahfuz Omar claimed the ECRL's total cost of RM55 billion cost when it all adds up may cost the government approximately RM91 million per one kilometer of tracks, as opposed to the Negeri Sembilan-Johor Bharu double tracking project that costs altogether at only RM3 million.

4.2.2.2 Conflict

Sinar also applied the conflict frame in their coverage of the 2017 Budget much frequently at 30.16 percent, with the opposition's walkout protest during the budget tabling session given the most coverage. Najib commented that the oppositions' action shows that they do not respect the budget that is supposed to serve the country and the parliamentary democracy system practiced in Malaysia, while Bera MP Ismail Sabri called the opposition as immature, and should have used another channel to vent out their frustrations. In his personal blog, Communications and Multimedia Minister Salleh Said Keruak states that the opposition's antics shows that they are treating the parliament like a 'circus act', when the budget itself is supposed to be a very serious business, echoed by UMNO Youth Chief Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar claiming the opposition's action was disappointing and only shows the lack of professionalism adopted by them, as they should have stayed and listened to the whole presentation. Federal Territory Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor added that since the

opposition had failed to prove that the country's economy is going down to the drain, they had to resort to walking out from the budget presentation since they cannot 'stand the heat' listening to the budget that will benefit the people's welfare. Umno Vice President Hishammuddin Hussein said the opposition's action was inappropriate and they only have themselves to be blamed for their own actions, while a member of the UMNO High Council Sohami Shahadan described the opposition's walkout during the budget presentation as a sign of disrespect towards the parliament and the mandate given to them. Minister at PMO Shahidan Kassim when answering Seremban MP Loke Siew Fook's enquiries about PR1MA delaying payments to their subcontractors, also poked fun at him saying that had the opposition did not stage a walkout during the budget tabling session then they would have notice the incentives announced by the government. While Batang Kali DUN member Mat Nadzari Ahmad Dahlan and other Selangor BN representatives staged another placard hoding protests, with sentences such as "we respect the mandates of the rakyat" during Selangor's 2017 Budget presentation, poking fun at oppositions' federal budget walkout.

Nevertheless, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng states that the budget presentation was being used a venue for political attacks on the opposition, as the speech resembles more like a political speech rather than a budget tabling session, while DAP's, Anthony Loke later argued that the walkout was a symbol of protest towards Najib who used the budget tabling session as an avenue for political speech, while Amanah Communication Director Khalid Samad stressed that the reason for the walkout because as budget did not address the corruption elements within the government itself. Following Pandikar Amin Mulia comments about the opposition walkout being unprecedented by countries like UK who practice parliamentary democracy, Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng asserted that during the Thatcher's administratin in 1981, many conservative members of the UK parliament also staged a walkout during the budget presentation, and called for the speaker to respect the democratic values enshrined by the parliamentary system. Pandikar Amin Mulia maintained that there is

no need for him to apologize to any member of the opposition following his comments about their walkout, and challenged Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng to not come to future parliament sessions if he does not recognize the speaker's authority in the parliament. Poking fun at oppositions' federal budget walkout, Batang Kali DUN member Mat Nadzari Ahmad Dahlan and other BN representatives staged another placard holding protests, with sentences such as "we respect the mandates of the rakyat" during Selangor's 2017 Budget presentation.

The budget is also covered under the conflict frame as sources give their take on the cost of living issues. PKR MP Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid claimed that the goodies provided under the budget will not solve the working class's financial problems, and there were no allocation for contingency plan should the country face an economic situation next year. Parti Pribumi Malaysia's information chief Kamaruddin Md Nor asserting that the budget failed to stimulate Malaysia's economic growth and was only intended to woo voters for the upcoming general election following the increase of Imams, penghulu, religious school teachers' allowance. DAP Secretary-General Lim Guan Eng asserts that the 2017 Budget is proof that the government is unable to help the people cope with the rise in cost of living, following the rise in prices of cooking oil subsidies, petrol and toll fees. Political analyst Dr Jeniri Amir explained that it is normal for the opposition to disagree with the contents of the budget, as track records have shown that they had never agreed with the budget tabled by the federal government in the past years. Commenting on the budget's proposal privatization of hospital assistance, DAP Johor Chairman Liew Chin Tong commented that the government should be looking into comprehensive management instead of outsourcing the service.

The budget's transparency and clarification issues also were covered under the conflict frame in Sinar's coverage, as PAS Youth Strategic Director Syahir Sulaiman argued that the lack of detail on allocation provided for highway concessions compensation are signs that tolls will be increased for next year, and the budget did not address issues of integrity and spending leakage by the government. Penang Chief Minister

Lim Guan Eng commented that Minister at PMO Abdul Rahman Dahlan's allegation of Penang and Selangor government blacklisting companies are baseless and only conducted to shift the attention from Budget 2017's discrepancies. Opposition Leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail claimed that the government did not address corruption issues in the government, and all the government's effort to address the matter are merely perfunctory, and continuing to burden the people. PAS Kedah Commissioner Dr Ahmad Fakhruddin Syeikh Fakhruddin claimed that it is unusual for the government to announce its estimated expenditure of the budget without disclosing the amount of revenue generated, making the budget seemed unrealistic, and added that Kedah has never enjoyed the rewards for not developing its water reserves area, nor for being the biggest rice producer in the country.

The ECRL project were also covered under the conflict frame, as Pokok Sena MP Mahfuz Omar questions the justifications for the ECRL's RM55 billion cost, as the Minister of Work had denied Sarawak Report's 26th July 2016 article that claimed the cost of the project would be ballooning from RM30 billion to RM60 billion. Deputy Minister of Transport Ab Aziz Kaprawi called for the opposition to not overreact about the estimated cost of the ECRL, as the deal has not yet been finalized, until it is scrutinized by the Economic Planning Unit and the Ministry of Finance and Mahfuz Omar's claims of ECRL's overinflated cost is an irrational oversimplification as he did not take into account the technical factors involved in building facilities in new places.

4.2.2.3 Economic interest

The conflict frame is ranked third in The Star's coverage of the 2017 budget at 19.05 percent, as the budget's expenditure and operational and development were mostly covered under the economic interest frame. Parti Pribumi Malaysia's information chief Kamaruddin Md Nor argued that the budget did not focus on any effort to stimulate foreign direct investment that is supposed to help the country's economic growth, plus the fact that the allocation provided for operational expenditure (RM214.8b) being much higher than developmental expenses (RM46.8b) is not good signs of economy. Selangor Menteri Besar Mohamed Azmin Ali claimed

that the budget will not be of any help promoting economic growth if the operating expenditure outweighs the development expenditure by significant difference. Kuala Terengganu MP Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah Raja Ahmad claimed that the totaled RM260.8 billion 2017 Budget will posed as the greatest challenge for the government due to global economic instability and the lack of clarity on where will the funding be coming from. UPM Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Management Dr Mohd Yusof Saari argued that the budget will not be contributing much towards economic growth as that the allocation for operating expenditure outweighs the development expenditure by a large margin, and given the current state of economy emphasis should have been made on developmental expenditure that will further benefit the people in the long run. Presiden Gabungan Pertubuhan Cina Malaysia (Hua Zong), Pheng Yin Huah commented that the budget for civil service is bloated and in need of realignment as the allocation for operating expenditure outweighs the development expenditure by a large margin.

Malaysia's current national debt were also covered frequently under the economic interest frame, as Najib explained that Malaysia's national debt is currently at moderate level at 53.2 percent of the country's GDP and the loans made by the government are productive expenditures that will further assist economic growth while providing the people with better infrastructures, while National Council of Professors Head of Economics And Management Cluster Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali said that Malaysia's trade deficit should not be considered as a bad thing in the context of surplus economy, as other countries such as United Kingdom and Singapore both have deficit over the 90% rate. In an op-ed, Abdul Kadir Jasin wrote that the budget is crafted in a way only to appeal to certain groups; goodies provision for the lower income, uninformed public for political mileage and the subsidies rationalization and economic transformation to boost the financial experts and investors' confidence without addressing the real problem, which is the increasing rate of national debt ever since Najib took over the country. He also added that the budget will be easily recalibrated using excuses such as global economic slowdown to divert the national

debt issue. Ministry of Finance (MOF) head of econometric (fiscal and economics division) Dr V. Sivabalasingam explained that there is no need of a recalibration for the budget as for now given the stable price of global oil market.

The budget's housing industry initiatives were also covered under the economic interest frame. Johor Menteri Besar Khaled Nordin commended the many initiatives made by the government to ease the financial burden of the people through proposals such as increase of housing initiatives that will assists more younger generations to own their first houses. Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein elaborates on the 12 housing project initiatives for families of army in service will be costing approximately RM1.2 billion and will be benefitting almost 4,000 families. Minister of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Noh Omar suggested for the cooperation between financial institutions and Real Estate & Housing Developers' Association Malaysia (REHDA) to come up with a mechanism that will encourage more affordable housing schemes that are priced below RM300, 000 per unit. A source from realtor group Henry Butcher Malaysia Sdn Bhd explained the government's affordable housing initiative scheme such as PR1MA and PPR that will be built on strategic locations around the cities will further hit the housing developers, as in order to compete with the government housing schemes, private developers will have to lower their profit margin while at the same time faced with strict credit control from financial institutions.

The ECRL project were also covered under the economic interest frame, with Terengganu Menteri Besar Ahmad Razif Abd Rahman praising the ECRL project proposal under the budget, asserting that the railway as well as the East Coast Expressway (LPT) will be bringing economic potential to the people of Terengganu. Secretary General of Treasury Irwan gar Abdullah asserted that the ECRL project will assist in reducing the cost of goods transportation that will help become a catalyst to economic growth in towns across the railways. Dungun parliamentary development officer Din Adam added that the ECRL proposal will be bringing many benefits to his constituency given its status as an education hub for Terengganu, and

the project will enable the district's potential economic growth.

4.2.2.4 Morality

The morality frame is ranked fourth in Sinar Harian's coverage of the budget at 7.94 percent, with most of the coverage on the opposition's walkout protest during the budget tabling session. After paying his respect for the recently passed Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Najib told that the opposition's action of staging a walkout shows the disrespect they feel towards the parliamentary democracy system. UMNO Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar stressed that the opposition's walkout is an act of disgrace and disappointment and that they should have opted for better ways to express their disagreement with the budget, while BN Federal Territory Youth Chief Mohd Razlan Muhammad Rafii described the opposition's walkout during the budget presentation as shameful and uncivilized, and that the opposition has a misguided understanding on the rights to free speech. Bera MP Ismail Sabri Yaakob added that the opposition was immature to stage a walkout during the presentation of the budget, and argued that they should have looked for better ways to express their disagreement with the content of the budget to respect the parliament, while Communication and Multimedia Minister Dr Salleh Said Keruak stressed that the opposition are too used to use demonstration as a mean to express their discontent with issues, when they should have stayed and listened to the presentation instead of venting out their frustrations through demonstrations all the time. PAS Youth Chief Nik Abduh Nik Abdul Aziz stresses the need for members of parliament to respect the budget tabling session as part of professionalism, and asserts that no MPs are entitled to walk out from a budget tabling session as they are given a mandate by the people and Federal Territory Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor commented that PAS has shown greater moral fibre when they chose not to participate with Pakatan Harapan leaders' action of walking out from the parliament during the budget presentation.

Islamic development and the government's role in that matter were also covered under the morality frame by *Sinar*; Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki stressed that the announcements made under the budget will drive the

younger generations to be a generation of “ulul albab” that will integrate the teachings of Quran well with worldly matters, and in an op-ed, he later described how the government has put in lots of efforts to ensure the development of Islam in Malaysia is in tandem with the needs of the modern world, it is up to the Muslims themselves to ensure that they do not stray from the path set to them by the Quran. Deputy Prime Minister Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi stressed that the announcement made under the budget on allocations provided for tahfiz education and religious schools are sign of government’s commitment towards the development of Islam in in the country, reminiscing a hadith that the rise of Islam will be coming from far east, which may have well be interpreted as from Malaysia.

4.2.2.5 Human Interest

The human interest frame was the least used in Sinar’s coverage of the budget, as only two stories (1.58 percent) were covered; as reports on Senator Abdullah Mat Yasim thanking the government for their initiative to address the Kelantan farmers’ dire financial needs, especially during rainy season, and an offshore plant worker telling that the ECRL may ease the troubles of workers that have to face heavy traffic every day to get to their plants.

TABLE 2
News Frame in Use

	<i>The Star</i> n=127 %	<i>Sinar Harian</i> n=126 %
Responsibility	40.94	41.27
Economic interest	34.65	19.05
Conflict	16.54	30.16
Morality	1.57	7.94
Human interest	6.3	1.58

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

The results demonstrate that both *The Star* and *Sinar* had published almost the same amount of articles, with both news providers using

almost the same amount of unit of news frames, 127 and 126 respectively. However, despite these similarities, the sheer differences in the types of sources quoted by these newspapers respectively may have influenced the news slants, as we can see that since *The Star* quoted fewer members of the opposition parties, the slants of their coverage on the budget to be more supportive of the budget in nature at a whopping 70.53 percent, as compared *Sinar* supportive news slants at 52.13 percent. *The Star*'s disparity in seeking news source contradicts *Sinar*'s, who used the opposition parties as their second most important source, thus can be seen increasing the percentage of critical slants in their coverage of the budget at 31.91 percent, as opposed to *The Star*'s critical news slants at only 12.63 percent totaled. This is in line with suggestion that the basic nature of the articles are determined and influenced by the sources used by the media, as Entman (1993) even furthered that given specific situation, the source may well become its own story.

The types of news source used continues to be a significant factor in comparing *The Star* and *Sinar*, as albeit both newspapers used the responsibility frame most in their coverage of the budget, a stark differences exist in the issues played up under the frame, as well the slants that were evident in their content. While *The Star* used sources from BN more often as well a few Chinese NGOs to praise the craftsmanship of the budget, *Sinar*'s focus on subsidies rationalization uses quotes and opinions by members of the opposition parties more, as compared to *The Star*.

Continuing on using opposition as their main source in their coverage of the 2017 Budget, *Sinar* carried on the responsibility frame in framing on the lack of clarity and transparency of the budget, raising questions about the feasibility of the budget given that certain information such as whether the budget has taken the global drop in oil prices into consideration. Nevertheless, *Sinar* did seek clarification from BN news sources such as Othman Aziz and Mustapa Mohamed whom asserted that claims that the budget is unrealistic should be dismissed. *The Star*, however, did not feature any article regarding the issue. The utter difference in reporting can also be seen within the context of the budget's impact on small businesses, as

The Star used the responsibility frame to highlight government's role in assisting small and medium enterprises (SMEs)'s growth using various professional sources, while *Sinar* featured no such coverage on the issue.

Another way *The Star* and *Sinar* differed specifically in their coverage on the budget was about Malaysia's advanced economic cooperation with China, by which *The Star* under the responsibility frame, highlighted the monumental achievement of working together with a country that is considered a giant in the realm of internet economy along with the ECRL being the "biggest economic deal that Malaysia has ever done with China", thanks to Najib continuing his father's legacy of taking bilateral ties with China to new heights. Under the economic interest frame, the cooperation with China is discussed in the context of promoting digital economic growth in the country in three articles, while the ECRL deal was discussed the economic potential that ECRL will bring towards the east coast regions, including the potential of making it part of China's new Silk Road initiative, while *Sinar* did not feature any articles specifically commenting the achievements of working together with China.

Nonetheless, *Sinar* did not highlight specifically on these Malaysia-China's new deals, but focus its attention on the ECRL project. Under the responsibility frame, the urgency to go through with the ECRL project given the need to encourage economic of small towns around area plus the benefit of having competitive funding provided by China for the project is very competitive, and the praise of providing new alternative modes of transportation for the people on Terengganu is echoed by *Sinar* using sources from BN. The ECRL project were also covered under the economic interest frame, with asserting that the railway as well as the East Coast Expressway (LPT) will be bringing economic potential to Terengganu, reduced the cost of goods transportation and the Dungun's parliamentary economic potential from the ECRL proposal given its status as an education hub for Terengganu. The human interest frame which was the least used frame in *Sinar*'s coverage of the budget was also used to highlight the opinion of an offshore plant worker telling that the ECRL may ease the troubles of workers that have to face heavy traffic every day.

Education issues were also reported under the responsibility frame by both news providers, as *The Star* seeks out sources from NGOs and professional bodies that urged the government to monitor the schemes that were to be implemented thoroughly as to ensure their successes. Regarding the special allocation that is to be provided to 120 schools under the budget, both news providers framed the issue under government's responsibility with neutral slants. However, specifically regarding higher educational issues, *The Star* featured more positive articles about the budget despite the ministry will be having their funds slashed, plus lauding the increased broadband speed and PTPTN repayment deal as 'a good deal'. *The Star* also used human interest frame to report educational issues, as stories on how two university students are going to spend the vouchers on their essentials. While *The Star* featured a civilian well satisfied to be getting discounts under PTPTN's new proposal under the human interest frame despite missing the chance to convert her education debt into scholarship, *Sinar*, on the other hand under the responsibility frame to highlights an opinion that the introduction of debit card for university students may lead to downfall of the book industry in Malaysia, quoting professional from the field. On the budget cuts experienced by the ministry of education, *Sinar* pursued a member of the opposition party as its news source under the conflict frame, by which claims of the government being negligent towards the needs of university students.

Housing initiatives that were introduced in the budget were also given much focus by both news providers, as *The Star* mostly covered the issue under the responsibility frame, praising the initiatives by the government to reinvigorate the housing market growth, making younger generation afford their own first homes and boosting stocks of construction groups to new highs following the budget's announcements. Under the responsibility frame, *Sinar* featured one supportive article on the budget's impact on the housing industry, as Noh Omar asserted that the housing initiatives are proof of BN's government to fulfill its GE13's manifesto of providing one million housing projects, while days later quoted an anonymous source from a realtor group lamenting the fact that despite the decline

in the property market since 2012, the budget did not give any benefits to the higher income groups as well as the local housing developers. It should also be noted that *The Star's* further coverage of the budget under the responsibility frame within the context of the housing industry were urging the government to do more for the housing market, suggesting the initiatives introduced by the government are inadequate, as found in five articles. The housing initiatives were also reported under the economic interest frame by both news providers, as *The Star* highlights professional sources elaborated on how the budget's housing initiatives is expected to benefit the housing market industry players.

The Star also focused much of its coverage of the budget under the economic interest frame on taxation issues, as they featured explanation on how the volatility of global oil market prices are the main reason the government had to diversify its income through taxation and subsidy rationalization, professionals highlighting that the tax reduction scheme proposed under the budget may help companies to allocate more funds for their expansions, help boost the growth of SMEs before TPPA, and praises of the tax scheme's encouragement for more growth by providing reduction based on company's income, and the initiatives of rebates for companies coming clean with their records, plus being able to maintain corporate tax rate at 24%. These tax initiatives were described as a well-thought mechanism that would increase government revenue without burdening the middle-class, and further help combat tax evasion in the country. The budget's introduction of many tax exemptions schemes was also given attention by *The Star*. The tax exemption for newspaper subscription is praised to easing the burden of taxpayers under the responsibility frame, while the economic interest frame was used to describe the potential this policy will bring towards digital economy. Despite the praises, the tax exemptions introduced for artistic corporate sponsorship, NGOs feel that the government should have provided direct incentives to the industry players, while professionals from tourism industry requested for tax exemptions on popular tourists' accommodation.

Regarding the opposition's walkout protest during the budget tabling

session, both news providers were found to be using the conflict frame the most in their coverage, with Sinar found to be providing greater coverage of the issue in terms of number of articles as well as frames used, which may have led to conflict frame being used more popularly by the privately-owned newspaper in their whole coverage of the budget. Under the conflict frame, Sinar focused on the walkout protest during the budget quoting BN sources, as Najib commented that the oppositions' action shows that they do not respect the budget, *Sinar* then furthered the issue quoting Ismail Sabri saying the opposition should have used another channel to vent out their frustrations, Communications and Multimedia Minister Salleh Said Keruak's personal blog equating the opposition's antics as a 'circus act', UMNO Youth Chief Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar claiming the opposition's action shows their lack of professionalism, Federal Territory Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor saying they cannot 'stand the heat' listening to the budget that will benefit the people's welfare, Umno Vice President Hishammuddin Hussein saying the only have themselves to be blamed for their own actions and UMNO High Council Sohami Shahadan describing the opposition's walkout during the budget presentation as a sign of disrespect towards the parliament. It should also be noted that these articles were also reported under the morality frame, as the sources prescribed a certain code of moral standards that the opposition need to obey. *Sinar* also highlighted Minister at PMO Shahidan Kassim when answering Seremban MP Loke Siew Fook's enquiries about PR1MA also poked fun at him saying that had the opposition did not stage the walkout then they would have notice the incentives announced by the government and Batang Kali DUN member Mat Nadzari Ahmad Dahlan and other Selangor BN representatives staging another placard hoding protests, poking fun at oppositions' federal budget walkout. Sinar later seek for sources from the opposition members such as Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and DAP national organization secretary Anthony Loke argued that the walkout was a symbol of protest of the budget tabling session being used as an avenue for political speech, PAN's Khalid Samad stressed that the walkout is staged because the budget did not address the corruption elements within the government itself and Opposition Leader Dr Wan

Azizah Wan Ismail later questioned Najib's absence during the budget debate session as opposed to the outrage on the oppositions' walkout during the budget tabling session. *Sinar* then furthered reporting the argument between the Dewan Rakyat Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia who claimed that he had already heard some rumors about the opposition planning to stage a walkout and following his comments about the opposition walkout being unprecedented by countries like UK who practice parliamentary democracy, Segambut MP Lim Lip Eng asserted conservative members of the UK parliament in 1981 also staged a walkout during the budget presentation, and called for the speaker to respect the democratic values enshrined by the parliamentary system.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study found that while the numbers of articles, as well as the unit of frame used by both news providers are about similar, the sheer difference in terms of coverage can be seen. Under the responsibility frame, *The Star* chooses to highlight more on the praises of the budget's craftsmanship while featuring a few suggestions to improve the budget, meanwhile *Sinar* on the other hand mainly used the responsibility frame to feature articles that are more critical of the budget and the government.

The difference in frames and slants utilized by both newspapers were also evident in their coverage of the housing and education initiatives; while both *The Star* and *Sinar* used the responsibility quite often in their coverage regarding the topics, the stark difference in slants by both news providers shows how much their sources are affecting the news slants of the article.

Sinar's insistence on using opposition members as source, although may serve as a proof that they are indeed a neutral player in the media industry, has also lead to the coverage of the budget being steered more into conflict frame, instead of focusing on the economic issues that of significant with the budget. This is most apparent in their coverage of the opposition walkout protest that is much larger as compared to *The Star's*, plus *Sinar's* lack of coverage in the taxation issue shows that the privately-owned newspaper, albeit being viewed as a 'neutral' media may have missed the

much salient points about the budget for sensationalism purposes. While *The Star* chose to report on the subject using sources from the government and professionals interchangeably, its lack of opposition members used as their source may only further audience's perception of the media being controlled by MCA, despite claiming the opposite.

Time constraints proved to be a very critical factor in conducting the study, since analyzing the bulk of the articles is known to be time-consuming. It also should be understood that this research is not intended to explain the applicability or feasibility of the budget per se, but rather to examine the difference between the coverage of the two different types of media ownership on a contemporary economic issue, the 2017 Budget. The researcher also recommends that more studies should be conducted on *Sinar's* coverage on economic issues given its status assumed as a neutral player of media the industry, as more study should be conducted on whether *Sinar* would focus their attention on economic issues or chooses the path of averting their attention by framing an economic issue using more sensationalized frames in order to attract more readership.

Further studies should also be conducted on the concept of development journalism. It should also be highlighted that as supported by previous studies [16, 20] that the tendency for journalists to seek government officials is evident in this study, while both news providers chose NGOs and civilians as their least used source in their coverage of the budget. This phenomenon maybe explained by Azizah's clarification that Western concepts of journalism may not always apply to the Asian countries model due to the cultural factors, as Asians often seek for government's and big business' opinion with regards to current issues [57].

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